

Abigail-

My answers to the background questions are that I was born and lived my whole life in the greater Boston area. I attended Boston College and received a B.S. in Biology. My last position was with the City of Melrose as a Recycling Coordinator. I was in that position for about five years.

As Belmont's Recycling Coordinator, what does your job entail?

I will be assisting the Director of Public Works, Peter Castanino and the Highway Division Manager, Mike Santoro, with the Solid Waste and Recycling Program in compliance with town policy. In essence, I will be educating Belmont residents and town employees on how to reduce trash. My first priority is to help the school and town with recycling in their buildings, trying to find where enhancements and updates can be made. The recycling industry is fluid and new concepts and regulations are coming along every year. However, not all new ideas are desirable for all communities. A recycling coordinator has to know their community and stay abreast of recycling/trash technologies to implement best practices that are environmentally sustainable and economically feasible.

Why did you take on this position?

I have an interest in the environment and feel that recycling is something important that I can do every day that will make a big difference. This job allows me to share my passion with residents. My days are never dull as I perform administrative work, meet with residents, research new recycling initiatives, visit schools, collaborate with local businesses and, best of all, look inside dumpsters and trash barrels!

Where do you see recycling in the Town of Belmont in the next few years?

First, I would like to say that the residents of Belmont do a great job recycling. With that said, there is always room for improvement. I would like the school and municipal buildings to implement recycling policies that can serve as examples of good practices for residents. Hopefully, new initiatives that work well in these buildings can be carried over for residents to replicate in their homes.

Who should be recycling and why? What can and cannot be recycled?

Everyone that receives curbside trash collection should be recycling. I'm not sure that its common knowledge, but recycling is a Town By-law and is required by all that receive municipal trash collection.

Items that can be recycled for Paper; mixed paper; cardboard; pasta, cracker and cereal boxes; newspaper, magazines, catalogs and junk mail; soft cover and telephone books; paper coffee cups; potato chip, frozen juice and nut cans; milk and juice cartons and clean, empty pizza boxes.

Items that can be recycled for Containers: plastic containers labeled 1-7; glass bottles and jars; metal cans and lids; clean aluminum foil and tins.

Yard waste

Appliances/ need to call DPW Dept. for sticker

Computers and TVs / need to call DPW Dept. for sticker. We are working to include laptop computers and computer peripherals (mouse, keyboard, hard drive, etc.).

Do you believe recycling should be mandatory?

Personally, I believe recycling should be mandatory nationally. For Belmont residents that receive trash and recycling services, it states in the By-laws that recyclables must be separated from other solid waste for collection.

Waste is beginning to be looked at differently. It is a material that has valuable items that need to be captured before it is buried or incinerated. Massachusetts is in the process of revising a 10-year solid waste plan titled "Pathway to Zero Waste". In its summary it states "solid waste management is an important contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which Massachusetts is bound by law to reduce 25 percent by 2020 below 1990 levels and 80 percent by 2050." Lowering the volume of trash will reduce greenhouse gas and compel residents to reduce, reuse and recycle. Having more items in the recycling bin will support green jobs, preserve natural resources, save energy and money for municipalities.

What are the greatest challenges to increasing overall recycling and how do you plan to overcome these challenges?

The biggest challenge is updating residents on changing recycling regulations. For instance, recyclables are commodities and new markets are emerging for items that were not recycled several years ago. For example, bottle caps, milk and juice cartons, and aseptic containers are all recyclable today. Textile recycling companies want clean gently worn clothes, but also accept clean torn or permanently stained clothes, clean stuffed toys, and bedding. Textiles in poor condition are made into rags or fiber for insulation and carpet padding. Technical advances in energy conservation such as compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) that must be recycled are replacing incandescent light bulbs that could be thrown out in the trash. Public outreach is important and needs to be made available in different media to reach all Belmont's residents.